

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
BUREAU OF HEALTH AND NUTRITION SERVICES AND CHILD/FAMILY/SCHOOL
PARTNERSHIPS
25 INDUSTRIAL PARK ROAD
MIDDLETOWN, CONNECTICUT 06457-1543

OPERATIONAL MEMORANDUM

TO: Sponsors of School Nutrition Programs

FROM: Maureen Staggenborg, Director, Child Nutrition Programs

DATE: October 13, 2004

SUBJECT: Operational Memorandum # 03-05 - Reminder of Verification Procedures

Sponsors are reminded that a sampling of approved free and reduced price meal applications must be verified each year. All necessary forms are available on the Child Nutrition Programs website at

<http://www.state.ct.us/sde/deps/nutrition/index.htm>

Please note that effective this year (school year 2004-2005), SFAs must allow households to provide documentation of income for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time the household is required to provide income documentation for verification.

This process must be completed no later than December 15, 2004. If you cannot complete Verification by December 15, you must send a letter to Maureen Staggenborg, Director, Child Nutrition Programs, by December 1, 2004. Your request will be submitted to our USDA Regional Office for approval.

You are encouraged to start the Verification process prior to October 31. However, the minimum number of applications chosen to be verified must be based upon the total number of applications approved as of October 31.

Sponsors must complete the Verification process if:

1. The program claims reimbursement for free and reduced price lunches and/or breakfasts, or
2. The program is a Residential Child Care Institution (RCCI) that has day clients and is claiming those day clients for free or reduced benefits based on the approved eligibility applications on file. Note: Verification is only conducted on the status of day clients.

In order to complete the Verification process, sponsors of National School Lunch/Breakfast must access the Department website and select from one of three options for conducting Verification. A review of the three options is indicated on page 2 of this memorandum. Additional detailed information is also provided on the enclosed

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER WHEN DOING VERIFICATION

IMPORTANT: This is a numbered Operational Memorandum that contains important program information. Please read carefully and retain in a binder for your future reference. An electronic copy may be found at the Department website.

The three Verification options are:

1. **Random Sample** – 3% of approved applications are selected randomly.
2. **Focused Sample** – a minimum of 1% of all approved applications, and .5% of all categorical applications, chosen according to the following criteria:
 - the lesser of 1% or 1,000 of the **total** number of approved applications (both income and categorical). The 1% sample is selected from income applications with total household income within \$100 monthly or \$1,200 annually of the current income guidelines for that size household;

PLUS

- the lesser of .5% or 500 of the total number of applications that were approved based on categorical eligibility, i.e., currently certified for Food Stamps, FDPIR or TANF. The .5% sample is selected from applications with a Food Stamp, FDPIR, or TANF number, or other FDPIR identifier
3. **100% Verification** – Sponsors may also choose to verify 100% of the approved applications on file.

IMPORTANT: Direct Certification letters from the Department of Social Services are not to be included in the determination of your sample size for Verification.

All sponsors, including all Residential Child Care Facilities (RCCIs) are required to report the outcome of their Verification procedures annually. The final version of an updated Verification report form is forthcoming, and will be forwarded after January 1, 2005.

Questions regarding Verification may be directed to Maureen Staggenborg (860-807-2070), Mary Ragno (860-807-2082), Teri Dandeneau (860-807-2079), or Bob Zwack (860-807-2081).

IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER

WHEN DOING VERIFICATION

Please share this information with the appropriate personnel conducting Verification.

Start by October 31 or earlier. (The number selected for Verification must be based on the total number of applications [minus direct certification letters] approved by October 31.)

Effective this year (school year 2004-2005), SFAs must allow households to provide documentation of income for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time the household is required to provide income documentation for verification.

- ☑ RCCIs that have **day students** must have approved meal applications on file to claim these day students as free or reduced. Verification will need to be conducted in those RCCIs that have approved day student applications on file.
- ☑ **Direct Certification Letters must not** be verified and should be subtracted from the total number of applications that are used to determine your sample on October 31.
- ☑ **Always round up** and make sure that you correctly calculate the number of applications to be verified. For example if you have 101 applications on file October 31 and you are doing random selection, you must select 3.03 or **4** applications for verification ($101 \times 3\% = 3.03$).
- ☑ Formal letters notifying households that they have been selected for verification must be sent and **copies must be kept on file in the school district**. Proper documentation is essential in order to demonstrate that you have successfully completed the Verification process. Keep copies of everything. *Verification cannot be conducted over the phone.* It must be done in writing.
 - ☑ Make sure your letters of notification give deadline dates for the parents/guardians to respond to you. Never say “as soon as possible or immediately.” Also indicate in the letter the consequences of their failure to respond (i.e., their child(ren) will no longer be eligible for free or reduced price meal benefits if they do not respond by the date indicated.)
 - ☑ Verification procedures must be completed **by December 15**.
- ☑ If you find that your school district's Verification cannot be completed by December 15, then the school district must send a letter to Maureen Staggenborg, Director, Child Nutrition Programs, requesting an extension. This request must be sent to the Child Nutrition Programs by **December 1**. Our Office will then submit the request to our USDA Regional Office in Boston for approval.
- ☑ Food Management Companies must not do the Verification process (or the application approval process) for the school districts. It is up to the school district to assign this task to a Board of Education employee.
- ☑ The Child Nutrition's **School Food Authority Verification Summary Report** must be completed by all NSLP & SBP sponsors and will be distributed at a later date. This report will not be due until after January 1, 2005.

